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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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Another week, more drama. It's getting ridiculous around here, but I'm still stuck with a lot of personal issues pertaining to family issues. These problems have been ongoing for over two years now, unfortunately. Occasionally, I manage to see a light at the end of the tunnel, but, unfortunately, I still don't have control of the lightswitch. The end result is that light keeps getting turned off, and I have to start more work trying to find it again! Not a fun situation.

So, for yet another week, I just can't seem to find the time or real inclination to comment on a newsworthy subject or two; and there's a lot going on out there that warrants a comment or three! Again, let's just get to this week's issue and enjoy what's in store for you all!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - FFXIV Beta on PS4 Open to Everyone This Weekend!
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Nintendo Shows Off Upcoming Mario Kart 8!
The History of Atari, Part 2!
And much more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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FFXIV Beta on PS4 Open to Everyone This Weekend

Square Enix has opened up its PlayStation 4 beta for Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn to everyone this weekend.

The beta started at 09:00 BST/01:00 PT this morning, and will run until 09:00/01:00 PT on Monday April 7.

The beta will be running on the actual game servers, so it’s possible to join your friends playing the game on PlayStation 3 or PC. Square Enix adds that any characters created or progress made in this beta will carry over the full version of the game, which is released on April 14.

To get involved, the 11GB client can now be downloaded from the PlayStation Store. You’ll also have to register an account with Square Enix to get started.

The successful relaunch of Final Fantasy XIV is one of the main reasons Square Enix expects to return to profit this year.

Nintendo Shows Off Upcoming Mario Kart 8, Including the New Rainbow Road Course

If you are a certain age, you spent a lot of your high school and college years playing your friends in Mario Kart, destroying them at it, and then screaming in their faces about your dominance.

Well, get ready, because the next chapter of Mario Kart is creeping closer.

On Thursday, Nintendo previewed the gameplay of Mario Kart 8, the latest version in the beloved Mario Kart series, in a series of YouTube videos. Via the official Nintendo magazine, the videos include a bunch of characters, courses, and power-ups that will be familiar to Mario Kart fans: the Flower and Mushroom Cups, red and green turtle shells, and an updated version of the famously difficult final track, Rainbow Road.

Mario Kart 8 will debut for Nintendo s new system, the Wii U, on May 30. You can check out a lot more of the upcoming tracks and features here.

The Wii U has failed to meet Nintendo s expectations, lagging badly behind the new Xbox and PlayStation consoles in sales. Nintendo is hoping to pick up momentum with games like Mario Kart 8 and Super Smash Bros. for Wii U newer versions of games that were popular on older, more successful Nintendo systems.

With the Xbox One and PlayStation 4 surging, and with companies like Amazon and Google entering television gaming, Nintendo is in a precarious spot, driving on the edge of Rainbow Road, teetering above black nothingness. We ll know soon if nostalgia can bring it back to the winner s circle.

World’s Fastest ’Ocarina of Time’ Player Just Beat His Own Record

What do you do after you break the Zelda: Ocarina of Time speedrun world record and once again establish yourself as the best to ever play the game?

For Cosmo Wright, the answer is to set another world record, this time completing the whole game in 18:51, beating his old record by five seconds. That was all in pursuit of the theoretical perfect run, which would be a good twenty or thirty seconds faster.

This category of speedrun is known as any%. A runner s goal is to complete the game as fast as possible by using any glitch or trick at your disposal. Cosmo has long been one of the best speedrunners in the world and we named him one of 2013 s ten most important people in esports.

Cosmo s goal from here is to break 18:30. After that? More than likely, he ll just keep running faster than anyone else in pursuit of that perfect run.

Five-Year-Old Boy Finds Xbox Security Bug

Can you imagine the excitement of a 5-year-old kid who s managed to hack into his father s stash of video games video games he shouldn t be playing?

Well, that s exactly what one California boy was able to pull off, and it sounded something like: Yay!

But don t worry. Dad isn t mad.

Robert Davies learned of his son Kristoffer s ability to hack into his Xbox Live account and actually thought it was awesome.

 Just being 5 years old and being able to find a vulnerability and latch onto that. I thought that was pretty cool, he told San Diego s KGTV.

Kristoffer, who first managed his way past his parents smartphone toddler lock at age 1, learned that he could reach a back door into his father s Live account on the family s Xbox One by simply typing a bunch of spaces into a password verification prompt. Kristoffer s parents asked their son to show them how he d gotten into Davies account after they noticed that he was playing a game they d locked him out of, according to KGTV.

Despite Kristoffer s fear that Microsoft might steal the Xbox, Davies, who works in computer security himself, reported the bug to Microsoft. The company has since patched the bug and even listed Kristoffer as a security researcher on its March 2014 list of contributors.

Microsoft is also giving the family four games, $50, and a yearlong subscription to Xbox Live. It s not quite the bounty that a Brazilian programmer recently got from Facebook for finding a security bug on its site (which was $33,500 and a job), but still not bad for an elementary school student.

 We re always listening to our customers and thank them for bringing issues to our attention, the company wrote in a statement about the fix. We take security seriously at Xbox and fixed the issue as soon as we learned about it.

For his next trick, maybe Kristoffer could find us a workaround for getting a little better in Titanfall. That game is not easy.

Portal and Far Cry 2 Designers Just The Latest Big Brains To Join Amazon Game Studios

Don’t let cyber attacks kill your game! Join GamesBeat’s Dean Takahashi for a free webinar on April 18 that will explore the DDoS risks facing the game industry. Sign up here.

Earlier, Amazon revealed its new microconsole and a first-party game exclusive to that device. Now, it has hired a pair of industry veterans to bolster its development team.

Portal developer Kim Swift and Far Cry 2 director Clint Hocking both joined Amazon Game Studios (and a plethora of Wizards of the Coast veterans) this month as senior designers, according to their LinkedIn profiles (as Kotaku first reported). They are working on unannounced projects that will likely end up on Amazon s newly announced Fire TV set-top box. The Ouya-like Android-based microconsole starts shipping oday for $99, and it already has an exclusive title in the sci-fi shooter Sev Zero.

We ve reached out to Amazon to ask what Swift and Hocking are working on. We ll update this post with any new information.

Swift s LinkedIn profile explains that she is working on secret things for a secret amount of time that no one can know about. After working on Portal and Left 4 Dead at developer Valve, Swift operated as the creative director at Airtight Games, which just released the Ouya exclusive action role-playing title Soul Fjord.

Hocking left Ubisoft in 2010 after developing Splinter Cell and Far Cry 2. He then went on to work on unspecified projects for LucasArts and Valve.

Swift and Hocking are only the most-recent additions to Amazon Game Studios roster of talent. In February, Amazon acquired developer Double Helix, which produced the Xbox One fighter Killer Instinct that debuted in November.

Amazon has a growing list of industry veterans working for it that includes a number of former Wizards of the Coast veterans:

Designer Gregory Marques, who helped develop Magic: The Gathering, is designing products for Amazon now.
Kyle Murray is Amazon Game Studios marketing lead.
Chris Galvin is senior product manager at the studio.
Bill Dugan, who worked on Magic: The Gathering Online and Wasteland at developer Interplay, is running the games team at Amazon as executive producer.

Not all of Amazon s talent comes from Wizards of the Coast. The company s game studio also hired author Eric Nylund, who wrote the Halo novels, to work as its director of narrative design.

So far, Amazon has only provided details for one of its original games, which is the aforementioned Sev Zero. That game has players controlling a futuristic soldier as he fights off waves of enemies with weapons and defensive towers.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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IGN Presents: The History of Atari - Video Game Pioneers

(Part 3 of 4)

In September 1972, Bushnell and co. installed the finished Pong prototype - made with a black and white TV, an orange-painted cabinet and a lot of solder - in a local bar called Andy Tapp s Tavern, where they had a good relationship with the owner, Bill Gattis. Pong went down brilliantly with the guy in a bar audience that had found Computer Space baffling; people were coming in just to play, without even buying a beer. In one of the most charming anecdotes in the story of Pong, Alcorn recalls that after a few days, he was sent to fix the prototype machine after Gattis called up to say it had stopped working - and found that the coin receptacle, made from a milk jug, was overstuffed with quarters.

Bushnell took Pong to two manufacturing companies, Bally (with whom Atari already had a contract to produce a driving video game) and Midway, but eventually decided that Atari had much more to gain from manufacturing the unit itself. The challenge was in finding financial backing - and given that Pong was a bit too close to that insidious, morally-corrupting, gambling-enabling pinball that was scandalizing America at the time, that wasn t nearly as easy as it should have been. Eventually, though, they managed to find credit and get an assembly line together, and though manufacturing was slow, Pong machines began making their way into the world by the end of 1972, and started shipping abroad in 1973.

Atari literally had to send representatives to the venues to collect sacks of quarters by hand.

Pong was a huge success. A single unit was typically earning around $40 a day, Bushnell estimated - in today s money that s $220. Atari was getting orders for the machines faster than they could make them. 2,500 were ordered by the end of 73, and by 74 over 8,000 machines were in bars, amusement arcades, restaurants and other places around the world. Those old yellow cabinets are now sought-after collector s items. Alcorn estimates only about 12,000 of them were ever manufactured.

Pong brought video games out of the realm of computer science, out of university labs, and into places where real people congregated. It brought the idea of a video game to working guys in American dive bars and British pubs, families at pizza parlours, students and kids at arcades and in cafes and leisure centers. In a way it s the same thing that mobile games have done for the modern games industry; it bought huge exposure. It would still be another 5 years before arcade machines really became a capital-T Thing, when the release of Space Invaders would really light the fuse for arcade gaming as a commercial and cultural phenomenon, but Pong paved the way, showing that coin-op electronic games could be both popular and astonishingly profitable. The home version

arrived in 1975, just in time for the holidays in the USA, where it was sold through Sears. It sold 200,000 units that first year.

Incredibly, in the early days of Pong, Atari literally had to send representatives to the venues to collect sacks of quarters by hand (the venues got 50%, and 50% came back to Atari). Steve Bristow, another of the company s early employees, was hefting 30 lbs worth of coins (roughly $600) in bags from bars to his car alongside his wife, carrying a roofing hatchet for protection.
Pong’s popularity spawned many imitators. Photo: Flashback Games.

Pong’s popularity spawned many imitators. Photo: Flashback Games.

It s surprising to learn how few Pong arcade machines actually existed, even at the height of its popularity. Most gamers grew up when consoles were selling millions. Today it s tens of millions. Most probably imagined that Pong would have at least sold half a million or so. It turns out that this has a lot to do with an interesting wrinkle in the Pong story: Atari didn t have a patent for it. In those days, patents took years to be issued, and Atari didn t file for one until the game came out in 72. Pong spawned legions of home-entertainment clones - most people in the Seventies probably became acquainted with Pong through one of these rip-off systems rather than through Atari s official home version. But although Atari didn t have a patent, someone else did: Magnavox, the manufacturers of that first ever home console and its suite of games, Table Tennis included.

By 1974, Ralph Baer, the inventor of the Odyssey and another of the early video games industry s formidable entrepreneurs, had managed to persuade his employer to pursue a lawsuit against Atari, asserting that Bushnell had copied the idea for Pong from the demonstration of Table Tennis he had attended in 72 (a signed guest book proved his presence there, and was later used in the court case against him). How Bushnell s company handled this lawsuit would have a huge impact on their fortunes in the years to come.

Instead of fighting the accusation in court, Bushnell and Atari eventually settled out of court for somewhere between $400,000 and $1m (accounts vary on the exact amount), becoming a licensee of Magnavox. This allowed the company to continue selling games that infringed upon Magavox s wide-ranging patent, which at that time covered pretty much any player-controlled television game, without actually needing to take other Pong imitators to court for infringement - it was Magnavox s patent they were violating, and so Magnavox was the company that spent vast amounts of its time and money tracking down and prosecuting immitators. Atari, meanwhile, could get on with making new things. Even though it could very well have won the court case, the settlement turned out to be a strategically better option, since it was Magnavox that ended up spending time and money fighting Pong imitators, and not Atari itself.

It is undeniable that many of Atari s early achievements were echoes of things that already existed. Computer Space was functionally very similar to Spacewar, albeit running on much cheaper and more commercially viable technology. Pong, despite the fact that it s a lot more fun than any of the tennis games that preceded it, can hardly be called an innovation. Did Bushnell and co. really invent arcade games, or did they find a way to make the electronic games that already existed in one form or another commercially viable?

Ralph Baer, perhaps understandably, is rather dismissive of Atari s

achievements. Mr. B. didn t invent anything, but he started a whole industry, the arcade video game industry, he said to Buzzfeed in 2012. Give the man credit for that achievement. He just simply didn t invent anything.

Bushnell s response to the legion of Pong imitators was to push Atari towards creating newer, fresher products, including Pong sequels and follow-ups like a four-player variation. The mid-to-late seventies saw the release of more successful Atari cabinets: Space Race, Tank, Gotcha, and Breakout - the last of which was commissioned by Alcorn and created by to two former college students named Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. The duo would leave Atari and form Apple Computer a few years later. Small world, isn t it?

Atari s overall trajectory was up up up, but this period of Atari s history wasn t entirely rosy. In 1974 Atari would make a series of major mistakes. Bushnell nearly bankrupted the company by overreaching with international expansion, and the disastrously expensive and complicated racing game Gran Trak 10. According to gaming historian Steve Fulton, the smash arcade-hit Tank was the game that saved the company - that and a merger with an Atari sister-company called Kee Games, which was split off from Atari s main business in 1973 to enable the company to sneakily get around arcane exclusivity rules that then existed in the arcade industry.

Microsoft Wins Approval To Excavate Atari’s Legendary E.T. Dump Site

The planned excavation of the fabled Atari dump site said to be filled with thousands of copies of E.T. The Extraterrestrial game cartridges has overcome its latest hurdle.

According to Alamogordo News, The New Mexico Environment Department has granted approval for the dig having previously blocked previous plans, claiming they were "too vague". There were also concerns that the ground held certain chemicals found to exceed federal thresholds.

Xbox Entertainment Studios, Fuel Entertainment and LightBox Entertainment however will now be able to dig up portions of an old Alamogordo landfill to search for the game cartridges, believed to have been dumped there after the title’s catastrophic failure which nearly single-handedly destroyed Atari.

The NMED has asked to be notified five working days in advance of any excavation and the companies must register as certified or commercial haulers of waste before they can start the dig.

News of the dig first emerged last year when film company Fuel Industries, which plans to document the whole excavation, was granted permission by Alamogordo to dig up the landfill site, which has remained buried since 1983. It was believed that Atari dumped 14 truckloads of discarded cartridges and computer equipment into the area, and covered the landfill over with concrete.

The company has around six months to excavate the land and find the game cartridges, if they exist.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

ICANN Chief: Russia, China Will Not Hijack Internet Oversight

The head of a nonprofit that manages the infrastructure of the Internet defended on Wednesday the U.S. government's move to cede oversight of the body, and downplayed concerns that Russia, China or other countries could exert control and restrict the web's openness.

The Obama administration last month said it would relinquish oversight of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN, which controls the "address book" of the Internet, the master database of top-level domain names such as .com and .net.

It also helps keep order of the web by managing the numeric addresses that are assigned to each web address to ensure users find proper content when they look for websites.

The United States, which gave birth to the Internet, has overseen the process but since 1998 has contracted it out to ICANN. Since then, the Department of Commerce has planned to phase out its stewardship and has taken many steps toward that.

The U.S. contract with ICANN will expire in September 2015, and last month the Commerce Department said it plans to formally turn the oversight capacity, which it says has become symbolic, over to a global multi-stakeholder mechanism that the ICANN community will propose.

The plan has provoked a backlash among some conservatives and other critics who say it may allow countries interested in limiting their citizens' access to some information on the web, such as China or Russia, to use ICANN as a venue to push for more restrictive Internet governance policies.

On Wednesday, the head of ICANN said the multi-stakeholder model - with governments, the private sector and other interested parties reaching consensus with equal power - will continue to restrain countries seeking to limiting the web's openness and freedom.

"Everyone is focused on these three, four countries ... but in between we have 150 other countries that value the same values we do," ICANN's chief executive, Fadi ChehadØ, said in an interview after a congressional hearing.

"Our commitment to the multi-stakeholder model is not so much for the few who do not believe in it, it should be to the great middle mass that would like to see us stand by it and they will stand with us. This is the bet we need to make."

Assistant Secretary of Commerce Lawrence Strickling also defended the

move at the House of Representatives' communications and technology subcommittee hearing.

"No one has yet to explain to me the mechanism by which any of these individual governments could somehow seize control of the Internet as a whole," Strickling said.

"Do you really think that (Russian President) Vladimir Putin ... can't figure out some way to get control? China and Russia can be very resourceful," Louisiana Republican Representative Steve Scalise fired back.

"The multi-stakeholder model, it stops them," ChehadØ told lawmakers in response. "I agree that people will talk about capturing (control of ICANN), but they haven't. For 15 years ICANN has operated without one government or any government capturing the decision making."

Other governments have recently pressed for the United States to formally shed its stewardship over ICANN in the wake of disclosures from former U.S. spy agency contractor Edward Snowden. Documents he released showed that U.S. intelligence officials scan vast amounts of Internet traffic.

The move was welcomed by various technology companies and consumer advocacy groups, but faces a political backlash.

Three House members have introduced legislation that would prevent the Commerce Department from shedding stewardship of ICANN's work before Congress reviews a nonpartisan study of what the move would entail.

In the meantime, ICANN is deliberating on how to set up a new oversight mechanism, which U.S. officials promised would not be limited to governments.

Discussions began last week at ICANN's meeting in Singapore, and the output from those talks is expected to be publicly posted for further comment on April 7, ChehadØ said.

Both he and Strickling pledged to not rush the process.

"If we don't get this right, there's a whole world of damage that could be done," ChehadØ said in the interview.

"If we finish it in 18 months, great. If we don't, then you know what, it doesn't matter, let's get it right."

Turkey Lifts Ban on Twitter

Turkey s telecoms authority lifted a 2-week-old ban on Twitter on Thursday after the Constitutional Court ruled the block breached freedom of expression, an official in Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan s office said.

Access to Twitter was blocked on March 21 in the run-up to local elections last Sunday to stem a stream of leaked wiretapped recordings of senior officials that had appeared on the site, prompting Erdogan to say he would root out the network.

Turkey s Official Gazette on Thursday morning published the

Constitutional Court s ruling from Wednesday, further piling pressure on the telecoms authorities to lift the ban, which had faced widespread international condemnation.

The ban has been lifted the official from Erdogan s office told Reuters by telephone minutes after TIB removed court orders blocking the site from its web page.

Google s video-sharing website YouTube remains offline in Turkey, TIB having blocked it one week after blocking Twitter. Legal challenges against the YouTube ban are pending.

After the court s decision, President Abdullah Gül, who has opposed the bans, was quoted as saying both websites should be made available in Turkey once more. San Francisco-based Twitter said in a tweet that it welcomed the ruling.

Within minutes of the ban being lifted, the microblogging site was flooded with messages, with one tweeter saying, Welcome back to Twitter, Turkey.

Others inside the country complained that they were still unable to access the site.

The lifting of the ban means that TIB will instruct Turkey s Internet providers to unblock access to the site, a process likely to take several hours.

Erdogan s critics saw the ban as the latest in a series of authoritarian measures to crush a corruption scandal that had grown into one of the biggest challenges of his 11-year rule.

Tech-savvy Turks quickly found work-arounds, with Internet analysts reporting a surge in tweets since the ban was imposed, but the issue has become a tug-of-war between Erdogan s administration and the microblogging site.

The U.S. State Department responded to the court ruling by urging Ankara to respect the decision and end the blockage.

Erdogan has repeatedly dismissed the leaked tapes   which point to wrongdoing by officials and members of his inner circle   as fabrication and part of a political plot against him.

His Islamist-rooted AK Party emerged far ahead of rival parties in municipal elections on Sunday that had become a referendum on his rule.

Dating Site OkCupid Calls for Firefox Boycott over CEO s Anti-Gay Rights Views

OkCupid.com, the popular online dating site, called for a boycott of Mozilla Firefox to protest the world s No. 2 web browser naming a gay marriage opponent as chief executive.

OkCupid visitors who accessed the website through Firefox on Monday were told in a message to use other browsers such as Microsoft s Internet Explorer or Google s Chrome.

Mozilla s new CEO, Brendan Eich, is an opponent of equal rights for gay

couples, the message said. We would therefore prefer that our users not use Mozilla software to access OkCupid.

 Especially in the kind of modern hero culture, the CEO is equivalent to the company, said Christian Rudder, an OkCupid co-founder. We have users who are trying to find other people, and we wanted to point out that this browser might be in conflict with their own values.

The nonprofit Mozilla Foundation s appointment of Eich as CEO on March 24 has attracted criticism from software developers, including some employees who have publicly called for Eich s resignation on social media.

Eich, the inventor of the programming language JavaScript and a Mozilla co-founder, donated $1,000 in 2008 in support of California s Proposition 8, which banned gay marriage in the state until it was struck down by the Supreme Court in June.

Eich has in recent days apologized for the pain he caused with his personal political views while vowing to uphold a culture of equality as CEO, including maintaining Mozilla s health benefits for same-sex couples.

OkCupid s move caught Mozilla by surprise.

 No matter who you are or who you love, everyone deserves the same rights and to be treated equally, a Mozilla spokesman said. OkCupid never reached out to us to let us know of their intentions, nor to confirm facts.

Three out of six Mozilla board members resigned late last week, which the company said was not related to Eich s views on gay marriage. The board was divided over whether to bring in an outsider to helm Mozilla versus Eich, who had been serving as interim CEO, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Mozilla CEO Who Backed Anti-Gay Marriage Law Resigns after Controversy

Mozilla CEO Brendan Eich, whose support for California s anti-gay marriage law Proposition 8 ignited a controversy for the Firefox maker, has resigned.

Mozilla announced the move in a blog post.

 Mozilla prides itself on being held to a different standard and, this past week, we didn t live up to it, Mitchell Baker, the executive chairwoman of Mozilla, wrote. We know why people are hurt and angry, and they are right: It s because we haven t stayed true to ourselves.

 Brendan Eich has chosen to step down from his role as CEO. He s made this decision for Mozilla and our community.

Eich, who founded the programming language JavaScript and cofounded Mozilla in 1998, was named Mozilla s new CEO on March 24. It was soon revealed that he provided financial backing for Prop 8, inciting calls for his resignation on social media, as well as a noteworthy protest from dating site OkCupid. Eich had defended the $1,000 donation in interviews, saying that his politics did not affect how he would perform as CEO.

Mozilla has not chosen a successor for Eich; Baker wrote that there would be new information on that front next week.

Mozilla s full announcement is below.

Brendan Eich Steps Down as Mozilla CEO

Mozilla prides itself on being held to a different standard and, this past week, we didn t live up to it. We know why people are hurt and angry, and they are right: it s because we haven t stayed true to ourselves.

We didn t act like you d expect Mozilla to act. We didn t move fast enough to engage with people once the controversy started. We re sorry. We must do better.

Brendan Eich has chosen to step down from his role as CEO. He s made this decision for Mozilla and our community.

Mozilla believes both in equality and freedom of speech. Equality is necessary for meaningful speech. And you need free speech to fight for equality. Figuring out how to stand for both at the same time can be hard.

Our organizational culture reflects diversity and inclusiveness. We welcome contributions from everyone regardless of age, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender-identity, language, race, sexual orientation, geographical location and religious views. Mozilla supports equality for all.

We have employees with a wide diversity of views. Our culture of openness extends to encouraging staff and community to share their beliefs and opinions in public. This is meant to distinguish Mozilla from most organizations and hold us to a higher standard. But this time we failed to listen, to engage, and to be guided by our community.

While painful, the events of the last week show exactly why we need the web. So all of us can engage freely in the tough conversations we need to make the world better.

We need to put our focus back on protecting that Web. And doing so in a way that will make you proud to support Mozilla.

What s next for Mozilla s leadership is still being discussed. We want to be open about where we are in deciding the future of the organization and will have more information next week. However, our mission will always be to make the Web more open so that humanity is stronger, more inclusive and more just: that s what it means to protect the open Web.

We will emerge from this with a renewed understanding and humility our large, global, and diverse community is what makes Mozilla special, and what will help us fulfill our mission. We are stronger with you involved.

Thank you for sticking with us.

Google Trying to Trademark The Word ’Glass,’ But U.S. Hasn’t Said ’OK’ Yet

Still struggling to make a good name for itself with a skeptical American public, Google Glass is now struggling to get its literal name approved by the U.S. Patent and Trademark office. The Wall Street Journal reports that the trademark office is pushing back against Google s plan to trademark the single word Glass for its wearable computerized eyeglasses.

Google already has legal claim to Google Glass, but two issues are holding back the plans to trademark Glass. For one, the term is too similar to other products and so could cause confusion among consumers. And secondly, the word is merely descriptive of the actual product. You couldn t trademark the word shoe for a shoe you re selling, for instance, the Journal notes. The trademark office s letter argues that Google Glass is made of glass, and so therefore it can t be trademarked.

Not so, Google responded in a 1,928-page letter. Google Glass in fact has no glass in it, and is instead made of plastic and titanium, Google s lawyers wrote, presumably high-fiving and yelling LAWYERED while typing the response. The majority of that letter consisted of media references to Google s product as Glass, as the company argues that the computerized eyeglasses have already become an established part of the culture and market. No final decision has yet been made by the trademark office.

New Tech Could Put An End to Overcrowded Public Wi-Fi Hotspots

Chipmaker Qualcomm announced on Thursday that it would support MU-MIMO (multi user-multiple-input multiple-output) in its upcoming network equipment and mobile chipsets, according to PC World. Simply put, this means that we will hopefully soon run into fewer overcrowded public Wi-Fi signals.

Right now, public Wi-Fi signals can easily be overwhelmed with hundreds of users and can lead to an extremely slow Internet connection or none at all. As PC World explains it, wireless access points use short time slots to communicate with only one user at a time. With MU-MIMO, access points will be able to communicate with multiple users at a time, potentially increasing speeds to 600 Mbps.

 In our case the network can talk to three clients at a time, so effectively it has a two to three times capacity improvement, Todd Antes, vice president at Qualcomm Atheros, told PC World.

To take advantage of MU-MIMO, both the access point and the mobile device need to support the new technology. Right now, Qualcomm s Snapdragon 801 processor supports MU-MIMO, which is behind the HTC One (M8) and the Samsung Galaxy S5. However, a software update is needed to activate MU-MIMO. Qualcomm will also support MU-MIMO in Snapdragon 805 processor.

Qualcomm competitor Quantenna also supports MU-MIMO, and its chip has made it into an Asus router already. The Wi-Fi Alliance will begin testing MU-MIMo later this year or early next year to ensure that MU-MIMO chips are interoperable with each other.

Microsoft Is Bringing The Start Menu Back to Windows

Microsoft is taking things back to the Start.

At its BUILD Developers Conference in California on Wednesday morning, Microsoft announced that it is bringing back the Start menu in a forthcoming update to Windows. Though Microsoft would not say when, exactly, the Start menu will return, a portfolio of changes is coming to Windows on April 8, designed to make Windows easier to use for those operating with a mouse and keyboard.

The re-addition of the Start menu is not expected to be part of that update. We know it s coming, but not when.

You can see a screenshot of the new Start menu below. It has the familiar column of applications and folders, as well as a column of Microsoft s live tiles, a new feature in Windows 8 that presents applications as big, touchable squares and rectangles, optimized for tablets, smartphones, and other touchscreen devices.

Windows 8 was originally intended to help Microsoft compete against the iPad and Android tablets by optimizing the operating system for touchscreens. And when Microsoft released the first version of Windows 8, many longtime Windows fans grumbled when it arrived without the familiar Start menu. Windows 8 originally split the experience of using Windows between two screens: a Start screen, which was stuffed with those live tiles, and the more familiar desktop view, which lacked the Start button. The Start menu was effectively replaced by a screen of live tiles, which you could access by pressing the Start button.

Though hypothetically helpful for those with touchscreen devices, this proved confusing and unintuitive to many who had upgraded from Windows 7.

In general, Windows 8.1 features updates that will make it work better with a mouse and keyboard, perhaps foreshadowing an even starker overhaul with next year s Windows 9. When you start up Windows 8.1, it will load the desktop view (with the Start menu), instead of the live tile view. You will also have the option to add that bottom taskbar to the live tile view, so that you can always find the Start menu, no matter where you are.

The Windows 8.1 update will be available on April 8 as a free download for Windows 8 device owners. We ll update you when the Start menu makes its triumphant return.

Google Is Reportedly Testing A Snooze Button (And More!) For Gmail

An email comes in. It s important. Not like, oh-god-drop-everything-or-we ll-all-die important, but it s something you should probably answer.

But you ve got stuff to do right now, so you don t. I ll answer this tomorrow, you tell yourself.

By tomorrow, the email has dropped down to the bottom of your inbox, replaced by 100 way less important things. You d still answer it if you

hadn t totally forgotten about it.

It happens to the best of us.

Back when Mailbox (now owned by Dropbox) launched in January 2013, their solution to this the ability to snooze an email to have it resurface at the top of your inbox was one of its most exciting features.

Now, it seems, Gmail wants in on the snoozin .

According to Geek.com, Google is testing a build of Gmail with a bunch of neat new tricks packed in, email snoozing included.

Also in testing, according to the report:

More tabs for sorted emails. In addition to the Social/Promotion/Forum/Updates tabs already found in Gmail, they re purportedly dabbling with tabs for Travel, Purchases (order confirmations, receipts), and Finance (banking stuff).

Email pinning, to force an email to stick to the top of your inbox until you decide to unpin it. (Note the pin icons next to individual emails in the screenshot above.) If snoozing is like hitting the snooze button on your alarm, pinning is letting the alarm blare in your face until you eventually get out of bed. It d also be particularly handy for emails you know you ll need to reference frequently, like one with an important address in it.

This sort of thing is why it was quite good that Mailbox sold when they did. As nifty as many of Mailbox s features were/are, it was only a matter of time before the big guys got around to copying all of the best bits they could manage.

14-Year-Old Says Different Typeface Could Save U.S. Government $136 Million Per Year

Even in a world that s quickly going digital, printing is still a necessity, and ink is costly. So costly, in fact, that it is more expensive per milliliter than oil, champagne, or any designer perfume.

Now, 14-year-old student Suvir Mirchandani may have come up with an ingenious way of cutting back on printing costs, simply by swapping Times New Roman for Garamond, which he said uses 30 percent less ink.

A favorite font of late Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, a special Apple version of Garamond was the company s typeface for nearly 20 years, the font for advertising, brochures, and manuals and its iconic Think different campaign and strapline. But as well as being a more aesthetically pleasing alternative to other serif typefaces, Garamond actually weighs less, too.

Mirchandani s discovery started out as a science fair project aimed at highlighting potential savings at his own school, but it quickly morphed into a research paper published by the Journal of Emerging Investigators applying his findings to the U.S. government.

In it he detailed how the use of Garamond, instead of Century Gothic or Times New Roman in the government s own printed literature could result

in savings of $136 million a year roughly 30 percent of the government s annual ink costs ($467 million).

To reach his conclusions, Mirchandani used APVSoft APFill Ink Coverage Software to calculate how much ink was being used with each typeface.

However, in his initial research into his own school s ink use, he went as far as to print individual characters in different typefaces on paper and then weigh the sheets to check how much ink was used in each case.

The prominent design site Fast Company Design is pushing back against Mirchandani s analysis, arguing that switching to Garamond would, in fact, save nothing.

Why Garamond Won’t Save The Government $467 Million A Year

A 14-year-old’s plan to save the U.S. government almost half a billion a year is too good to be true. Font nerdery ahoy!

Last week, media outlets from CNN to the Economic Times reported on a story that pretty much everyone could feel good about: a 14-year-old font nerd in Pittsburgh crunched some numbers and figured out how to save the U.S. government nearly half a billion dollars a year, just by printing all of its documents exclusively in the light-stroked typeface Garamond. One problem: There’s very little reason to believe that Garamond would save the government any money at all.

First, let’s look at how Mirchandani arrived at his conclusions. For his middle-school science project, Mirchandani measured four different fonts - Times New Roman, Garamond, Comic Sans, and Century Gothic - and discovered that Garamond’s thin, light strokes resulted in a font that required 24% less ink. Given that printer ink is twice as expensive as Chanel No. 5, it stands to reason that if government officials switched to a less wasteful font, they could save a lot of money: as much as $467 million per year if both federal and state agencies got on board, according to his paper published in the Journal of Emerging Investigators. Except that it isn’t that simple.

At The Same Size, Garamond Doesn’t Actually Use Less Ink Than The Other Fonts

Mirchandani is only 14, so he can be excused for not understanding this weirdo oddity of the way fonts are measured, but the biggest issue with his argument is that he measured Garamond at the wrong size! Therefore, the ink cost savings of switching to Garamond is largely imaginary. Type expert Thomas Phinney has a great post explaining why, but we’ll do our best to present it in more layman-friendly terms here.

"The cost savings of switching to Garamond is largely imaginary."

Fonts are traditionally measured in a system called points, with one point corresponding to 1/72nd of an inch. This is true in both physical and digital printing. Rationally, then, it seems obvious that a 12-point font should be 1/6th of an inch tall, when printed. But the reality is much different. There is no guarantee that when you print out a font at 12-points that the letters will be 12-points tall. Only the line which the letters will be printed on will be 12-points tall.

These fonts are nominally all the same size. Why is Garamond the least legible? Because it’s smaller.

Imagine that you have a metal block for a 12-point letter "l." When you dip this block in ink for printing, the raised "l" will end up rubbing off on a piece of paper, but depending on how that "l" was designed, it is unlikely that it will actually be 1/6th of an inch tall. The 12-point measurement instead refers to the size of the type body - the flat metal part of the type that never touches ink.

What makes a 12-point font a 12-point font, then, has nothing do with ink. It’s invisible on the page. This means that, depending on how a typeface is designed, some fonts at 12 points will be physically smaller (and therefore less readable than others at the same size. You could, in theory, have a 12-point font with letters that were almost invisible to the naked eye, but that wouldn’t make it a more efficient font when it comes to ink savings or readability.

This is the major trap Mirchandani fell into. Garamond’s letters are significantly smaller at the same font size than those of Times New Roman, Comic Sans, and Century Gothic. As Phinney notes, in fact, Garamond is about 15% smaller than the average of the fonts that our plucky 14-year-old compared it to, which translates into a 28% savings in surface area--pretty close to Mirchandani’s alleged 24% savings in ink.

What this all means is that if you printed any of the other fonts to match Garamond’s actual size, you’d get almost the same savings in ink cost, at the same expense of readability. Garamond doesn’t really use less ink than Times New Roman, Comic Sans, or Century Gothic: it’s just the equivalent of a 10-point font rendered on a 12-point line. And sure enough, if you look at Mirchandani’s sample text, Garamond looks like it has been rendered at a much smaller point size than the other fonts; it’s obviously harder to read.

"If you printed any of the other fonts to match Garamond’s actual size, you’d get almost the same savings in ink cost."

Not All Printer Ink Is As Expensive As Chanel (Especially For The Government)

But let’s say Mirchandani is right, and that Garamond does use less ink than other fonts. Would it really end up costing the government less money? At first blush, the answer seems obvious. We’re all annoyed by how expensive printer ink is. In fact, at a cost of $4,285 per liter, it’s almost double the cost of even the most expensive perfumes on Earth. If the government could use less of this valuable resource, it should save massive amounts of money.

Right? Well, no. And there are a few reasons.

For one, while printer ink is undeniably a racket, it’s largely a consumer racket. The government doesn’t pay for ink the same way we do. Rather, like many offices, it strikes deals with outside companies that charge per page printed, regardless of how much ink or toner is used. This means that a U.S. government printer used to print out a color photo costs exactly the same amount as a blank sheet of paper with a single letter typed on it.

"The government doesn’t pay for ink the same way we do."

Second, inkjet printer ink may be how most consumers print at home, but the government supplements inkjets with laser printers, which use toner. Toner costs about half as much as printer ink per page, but Mirchandani’s study assumes they cost the same.

In addition, the bulk of the U.S. government’s printing is done on the printing press - printing out W-2 forms, pamphlets, and the like - not office laser jets or ink jets. Press printers have a vastly different economy than inkjet printers: they aren’t charging based upon the number of gallons of ink used, but based upon the complexity of a given page’s layout, and definitely not at a price of $4,285 per inky liter.

The Innovation by Design Awards celebrates the controversial ideas, new products, business ventures, and wild ideas highlighted every day on Co.Design. Winners and finalists are featured in a special design issue of Fast Company magazine. Enter today.

In short? Just cutting down on the ink that a font uses can t substantially reduce the government s printing budget. The whole study assumes the government prints all of its documents like someone’s grandma printing out birthday cards on a cheap HP inkjet. In reality, though, the government mostly pays per page, either through service contracts or on printing presses.

Conclusion

Using less ink might cost the government slightly less money, but it’s not going to come from switching to Garamond. Garamond’s letters are smaller at the same height as other fonts, making it less legible at the same size when printed out. And even if the government did switch to a font that maintained legibility at the same size as Times New Roman while using less ink, the government would likely not save much money by switching to it.

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